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Editor: Giampaolo Bettamio

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ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Statement by Mr Hans-August LÜCKER, Chairman of the Christian-Democratic Group.

The election of the European Parliament's President has been an important political test.

The cooperative spirit displayed by the coalition formed from the Christian-Democratic Group and the European Conservative Groups is undoubtedly an outstanding political fact which could have a notable influence on the Parliament's future activity, even though the candidate of the opposition coalition was the winner.

Our coalition showed that it was based on a common platform of political values and views.

Furthermore, it must be pointed out that this election, which saw political groups of such diverse views as the Socialists, the Liberals, the Gaullists and a number of non-attached members of various origin united in an ad hoc agreement, did not appear to have been carried out on a political basis.

It is, therefore, difficult to conceive that such an ad hoc coalition can have any serious political part to play in the future of the European Parliament, the political character of which is daily coming more and more to the fore.

Statement by Mr Giovanni BERSANI, Vice-President of the European Parliament, member of the Christian-Democratic Group.

The election of the European Parliament's new President provides grounds for political consideration of the function of the first representative organ of the EEC.

Irrespective of the persons involved, it must be pointed out on this occasion also that the method of entering into agreements for the purpose of giving the presidency in turn to representatives of different political groups (and of different nationalities) conflicts with the primary need, to which all have always paid lip-service, to emphasize the political character of the parliamentary function.

The result bears out the criticism voiced beforehand by the Christian-Democratic Group of the contradictory nature of such agreements. The new President was in fact elected with the votes of the Liberals, Socialists, Gaullists and the Italian Right, forming a coalition devoid of any political coherence.

The election of the President must be brought on to the plane of political

logic; as the outcome of agreements designed to restore, in specific historical situations, political platforms which are balanced within the assembly and based on a consistent strategic plan and on majority objectives defined by agreement.

The Christian-Democratic Group in the European Parliament will continue to strive for the introduction of such a political alternative.

OFFICES HELD BY THE CHRISTIAN-DEMOCRATIC GROUP

IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

FIVE VICE-PRESIDENTS OF THE PARLIAMENT

Of the twelve Vice-Presidents elected, five are members of the Christian-Democratic Group :

GIOVANNI BERSANI

: Member of the European Parliament since 1960 and of the Chamber of Deputies in Rome since 1948, he was reappointed Vice-President at Strasbourg. Member of the Italian Cabinet from 1951 to 1953.

FRIEDRICH BURGBACHER

: Member of the Bundestag since 1957. Of the Christian-Democratic Vice-Presidents, has the longest service in the European Parliament of which he has been a member since 1958. A Doctor of Economics and Political Science, Mr Burgbacher has been a member of the CDU since 1948.

ANDRE COLIN

: Senator Colin is a member of the Bureau of the Christian-Democratic Group. He became a member of the European Parliament in 1958, serving for most of that year, and has been a member continuously since 1963. He belongs to the French Catholic Action Movement, of which he has been Secretary-General and Chairman. A Doctor of Laws, he was a founder of the MRP. He has been Secretary of State a number of times and once, in 1948, a Minister.

MAURICE DEWULF

: Member of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives since 1954, Mr Dewulf is the youngest of the Christian-Democratic Vice-Presidents. He is a member of the Bureau of the Christian-Democratic Group and has been a member of the European Parliament since 1968. Dr Dewulf is also a member of the UN General Assembly and Economic and Social Council.

ANTHONY ESMONDE

: M.D.; member of the Fine Gael party. Member of the Irish Parliament (Dáil Éireann) since May 1951. Member of the Council of Europe from April 1961 to May 1962. Member of the European Parliament since 1 January 1973 and Vice-President since 13 March 1973. Member of the Political Affairs Committee and of the Committee on Public Health and the Environment.

In addition to the five members of the Christian-Democratic Group, THE EARL OF BESSBOROUGH, European Conservative Group, has been elected Vice-President of the European Parliament.

FOUR CHAIRMEN OF PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

ALFRED BERTRAND

: Committee on Social Affairs and Employment

TIMEN BROUWER

: Legal Affairs Committee

GIOVANNI GIRAUDO

: Political Affairs Committee

GERD SPRINGORUM

: Committee on Energy, Research and Technology

EIGHT VICE-CHAIRMEN

The Christian-Democratic Group has eight vice-chairmen of parliamentary committees :

HEINRICH AIGNER

: Committee on Budgets

GIOVANNI BOANO

: Committee on External Economic Relations

CORSTIAAN ANDREAS BOS

: Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

MAURICE DEWULF

: Committee on Development and Cooperation

HANS EDGAR JAHN

: Committee on Public Health and the Environment

CHARLES MCDONALD

: Committee on Cultural Affairs and Youth

NICOLAS KOLLWELTER

: Committee on Regional Policy and Transport

MARIO VETRONE

: Committee on Agriculture

PLEDGE FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In the first number of this Bulletin (page 6) we reported that the Political Affairs Committee had appointed Mr Scelba to draw up a motion on peace in the Middle East, and emphasized how the political activity of a group such as ours, with its Catholic ideology, could make an important contribution through this motion.

At its sitting of 15 March, the European Parliament, with the wholehearted approval of all, adopted the following motion drafted by Mr SCELBA:

"The European Parliament"

- considering that the Member States of the European Community are particularly concerned that a peaceful settlement should be brought about as rapidly as possible in the Middle East;
- having regard to the general interest of the European Community in establishing itself as a force for peace and reconciliation, first and foremost in a nearby area - the Mediterranean - of vital importance to the security and prosperity of the peoples of the Community;
- considering that Resolution No. 242 adopted by the Security Council in 1967 is an acceptable basis for seeking an equitable solution;
- having regard to the report of the Political Affairs Committee (Doc. 335/72);

1. Calls on the Governments of the Member States, having regard to the possibilities of Community action to promote the cause of peace in the Middle East, to lay down a community policy and appropriate instruments to be suitably used at the time judged most opportune; this community policy must in particular include provisions for peaceful reconstruction, in the social and economic spheres, of the countries concerned;
2. Decides to forward this resolution to the Member States Governments and to the Council and Commission of the Communities.

This is not the first time that the Parliament has concerned itself with the Middle East; particularly prompt and much appreciated was the resolution approved on 22 June 1967 after the Six-day War.

Then, as now, it was clear that the European Community was offered a great opportunity by the Middle East crisis to formulate in a practical way the basic elements of a common foreign policy and thus present to world public opinion a credible image of the European Community as a factor for peace. To these two purely political considerations, should be added the pledge given in the declarations at the Hague and Paris: the Parliament, therefore, could not remain silent.

Some reservations might have been made with respect to the possible repercussions of the position taken up by Parliament. The Christian Democratic Group, however, through its spokesman Mr SCELBA, brushed aside these doubts and voiced its conviction that, whatever the immediate results, Parliament's interest in the vicissitudes of the Middle East sprang from the role of the European Community as a force for peace, which was not confined to what was happening in the Middle East. In approving the motion, Parliament was as one in leaving no room for doubts as to its effectiveness, thus demonstrating its support for Europe's presence wherever and whatever circumstance peace was absent: "The European Community", said Mr SCELBA, "cannot remain idle or leave to other countries, less interested or less disinterested, the decision whether or not to promote peace."

SOCIAL POLICY AND INDUSTRIAL SAFETY

The Paris Summit Conference of 19 and 20 October 1972 emphasized in the clearest terms the political will of the Governments to spare no effort to adopt a coordinated policy in the labour and vocational training sector and to improve the working and living conditions of workers.

If this is the will of the Governments it must be put into effect with the utmost despatch: it is clear from the report on health and safety in coalmines and in the iron and steel industry presented by the bodies concerned and debated in Parliament that the situation is far from ideal.

Mr PETRE, in his speech in the Chamber, pointed out that while the number of iron and steel workers was decreasing, there was an increase not only in production but also in the number of fatal and serious accidents. Was there a connection between them ?

Mr PETRE went further: it should be checked whether the frequency of accidents was also influenced by the system of remuneration - often by the day - applied in the industries.

Finally the question arose whether inadequate training, as well as the difficulty of making themselves understood in the language of the country, might not play a significant part in accidents involving foreign workers.

All these questions eventually led back to the basic problem of the lack of a social policy in the Community and underlined the value of the Summit decision to give official recognition to the fundamental role of social policy in the enlarged Europe. The difficulties of achieving such a policy were many, as borne out by the remarks of Mr John HILL and Mr GIRARDIN on the subject. Mr HILL concluded his speech, however, by saying that there were grounds for optimism because the scope for harmonization between the different national legislations was sufficiently wide and flexible to permit the present level to be raised to progressively greater degrees of integration.

GIVING A GREATER POLITICAL SLANT TO THE EEC'S EXTERNAL
COMMERCIAL RELATIONS

The unilateral negotiations to be conducted in GATT between the European Community and the United States on the EEC's external commercial policy give rise to a number of reflections of a technical and economic nature, but also open up a purely political perspective.

There is no doubt that the accession of the United Kingdom has widened the geographical scope of the problem and underlined its political aspect, just as the agreements of last July for a free-trade area in industrial products with EFTA countries that are not members of the Community have a number of implications which show the EEC's external commercial relations in a light that is certainly not purely economic.

This new political dimension of the problem was pointed out at Strasbourg by Mr BOANO, member of the Christian-Democratic Group.

To speak of a new dimension did not mean forgetting or playing down the fact that these negotiations with the United States would be difficult, if only because of the vast economic interests at stake. It was essential, however, that the positions taken up by the two sides should not be expressed in terms of irreconcilable theses which would inevitably lead to a head-on confrontation. And the only possibly way to avoid this unpleasant prospect was to emphasize the political character of the negotiations in which a European Community committed to a grand design for peace in the unsettled areas of the Mediterranean and in the under-developed countries should be seen as a worthy partner in the dialogue with the United States.

Clearly both the Community's Mediterranean policy and its preferential policy as a whole would give the United States understandable grounds for anxiety if they continued to be confined to a purely commercial situation. There would appear, however, to be rather more justification for them if they were politically directed towards relieving tensions and removing dangerous temptations from the underdeveloped areas of the world. This could give the Community an image of greater political integration and greater readiness to meet the expectations of so many of the world's peoples, and at the same time enable it to present itself at the negotiations with the United States and before public opinion with a new kind of dialogue.

EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BETWEEN THE COUNCIL AND PARLIAMENT

Every year the European Parliament and the Council hold an 'exchange of views' on the main aspects of the unification of Europe. This practice was started in the days of the Common Assembly of the ECSC in order to create a link between the Parliament and the Council, something which had not been provided for by the Treaties.

Mr Van Eslande, Belgium's Foreign Minister and President of the Council of Ministers, drew attention to the deadlines fixed for the European Institutions with regard to monetary policy, regional policy, social policy, environmental protection and Community's external relations.

Above all he dwelt on the need to fight inflation and make progress towards economic and monetary union.

A lame and fragile monetary system

Mr Alfred Bertrand (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the Christian-Democratic Group, took up this same pressing issue. In his reply to Mr Van Eslande, he expressed regret that the Council of Ministers had not been able to subscribe to the proposals drawn up by the Commission on 11 March. Even if a step forward had been made, a global solution to the crisis had not been found.

He also pointed out that in six years the value of the dollar had fallen by 43% in relation to the Deutschmark. This surely was proof that the present system was 'lame and fragile'.

On the question of how to combat inflation, the Council did not succeed on 31 October last in defining a common policy. Even if agreement was reached on certain matters, such as the need for a structural policy in that sphere, the Ministers had not at any time succeeded in finding a common approach to the problem.

Strengthening the institutions - a first priority

Finally, Mr Bertrand brought up the question of the social policy. Though he welcomed the fact that precise deadlines had been fixed at the Paris Summit, he expressed the fear that they might be indefinitely postponed if the institutions of the Community were not strengthened and the decision making procedure in the Council was not changed.

Strengthening the institutions must, therefore, be one of the first priorities if there was to be rapid progress towards European unity.

Mr Van Eslande also dwelt on the need to strengthen the institutions, a matter which was one of the Council's main concerns. The Council, too was extremely anxious to strengthen the powers of the European Parliament.

Towards a common regional policy

Mr Mitterdorfer, speaking to his own oral question No. 35/72 on regional policy, pointed out that it was not the first but in fact the third time that the Commission had addressed a question on regional structures to the Council of Ministers. The Council, in spite of having acknowledged the importance of a clearly-defined common policy in this area, had not taken any decisions and had not even kept to the deadlines fixed.

Mr Mitterdorfer then appealed to all Member States to surrender some of their powers in order to make a common regional policy possible.

In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the accession of the three new states to the European Community would help to overcome the general reluctance to adopt such a regional policy.

Tackling the trouble at its root

Mr Burgbacher, speaking on behalf of the Christian-Democratic Group, compared the monetary situation to an iceberg with only its tip showing. In his opinion it was impossible to offset the disadvantages to competition arising from the obvious difficulties of the industrialized countries by adjustments in exchange rates. What would happen in the event of devaluation? The solutions suggested were therefore only temporary. Solutions had to be found at Community level. But if Europe proved incapable of attaining its commercial objectives it would have to fall back more than ever on protectionist measures. Mr Burgbacher concluded by stressing 'It is essential to tackle the trouble at its root by reducing the volume of money clogging the market in the form of bank and other credits.

France: lessons of the polls

Never has a French election campaign lasted so long, and never has its outcome been so 'open'. Never has the Gaullist majority seemed so ravaged by scandals and Jacobinist trends. The Left's common programme, the really novel feature of the campaign, was a serious threat to the ruling majority.

In order to survive despite the crushing bipolarization imposed by the electoral system, the Centre had taken the offensive under the banner of the Reformist Movement.

In short, if the result of the polls on 4 and 11 March was a surprise, it was rather because of the relatively slight swing in the voting.....

The majority (Gaullists, Independent Republicans, Democratic Centre Démocratie et Progrès) holds its position. The Left, though it gained considerably by comparison with 1968, has not even restored its 1967 position. Finally the Reformists, though they will be able to form a parliamentary group, have failed to make the idea of a 'third path' credible.

To discern such changes as there are, we must look more deeply. In this poll, the most striking feature of which was its bipolarization, each of the two large blocs underwent a profound change. The majority bloc was considerably reduced (100 deputies less), and its internal balance was completely changed. The UDR no longer holds the absolute majority in the National Assembly won for it in 1968 by the widespread alarm then prevailing. Its relative importance within the majority has diminished in favour of the Independent Republicans and the Centre Démocratie et Progrès: though the UDR alone had formed more than 80% of the majority since 1968, this percentage has now fallen to about 60%. This change in the balance of forces within the majority ought certainly to be reflected in the composition of the government and the policies followed by it. In other words, the 'UDR State' is defunct.

The Left, for its part, has also failed to achieve its aims. It is true that the 'discipline of the Left' functioned more smoothly in the second round than in previous elections. Once again, however, though all the Communist votes went to the Socialist candidate in the second round, this was far from the case with the Socialist votes which, in three-cornered contests, were often given to Reformists or withheld altogether in the second round. Even among Left-wingers the fear of Communism played a part.

The Socialist Party thus made clear-cut gains in the number of seats, most of them thanks to Communist votes in the second round.

Mr MITTERAND did not however, succeed in his aim of 'restoring the balance of the Left' by making the Socialist Party the biggest party of the Left. On 4 March he obtained only 19.18% of the votes (20.65% with the Left-wing Radicals) while the Communist Party (though it did not do as well as in 1967) obtained 21.34%. If the Left had won an absolute majority, the Communists would have been in a very strong position.

These are the main conclusions to be drawn from the polls. All that remains now is to take a critical look at the French electoral system. This system is such that the Left, with its 46% of the votes in the first ballot, has fewer elected representatives than the majority, which could take only 35% of the votes. An average of 30,000 votes was enough to elect a deputy of the majority while it took almost 100,000 votes to elect a deputy of the Reformist Party.....

It is clear, therefore, that in order to win the day, the majority had once more to use the threat of a constitutional crisis and take advantage of a favourable polling procedure. In the programme of their next government, the Gaullists must draw the moral from these elections lest they themselves lead France into a grave crisis.

RESEARCH AND THE AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Last year, after a silence lasting nine years, Carol Scarascia Mugnozzia, then Commissioner for Agriculture, returned to the problem of agricultural research at the European level. The basic idea which prompted him to re-open a problem so long ignored was that as agriculture is gradually modernized and placed on a business footing, it needs the backing of research for its plans of investment, production, organization, etc.

The multiplicity and diversity of measures taken at the national level, and the limited resources generally earmarked for research, have raised two problems: that of coordination and that of providing a greater boost, not least in the form of finance.

Mr VETRONE explained to the European Parliament the EEC Commission's proposal for coordination of agricultural research, dwelling on its somewhat general character, that is, on the fact that it traced out the broad lines of action to be taken to harness agricultural research to the aims of the common agricultural policy. According to Mr Vetrone, the Commission, when it proposed concrete action, especially if accompanied by financial involvement, should come forward with more effective instruments than 'recommendations' addressed to the Member States. This was all the more to be expected in view of the fact that, as regards measures in the ecological field, there was already a tendency towards more effective instruments for the Commission's interventions on measures taken by the Member States. These observations were supported by Mr MCDONALD for whom the problem of agricultural research was a fundamental one, given the extreme climatic conditions and low return on Irish farms.

There is no doubt that from the political point of view this question presents some ticklish aspects. As Mr SCOTT-HOPKINS pointed out, the problems stem from the fact that, at the political level, agricultural research lies outside the competence of members of Parliament and at the same time has important economic consequences for citizens.

It is therefore of the utmost importance that the Commission should undertake to consult the European Parliament on any practical steps and on any financial intervention it is contemplating.

ACTIVITIES OF MEMBERS OF THE CHRISTIAN-DEMOCRATIC GROUP

Mr ARTZINGER, supporting an amendment tabled on behalf of the Committee on Budgets on the setting up of a European Monetary Cooperation Fund, expressed the view that the common floating of the six currencies requires harmonization of the economic policy measures taken by the Member States.

Report by Mr DURAND on certain aspects of the Common Agricultural Policy
Mr AIGNER spoke at the meeting of the Committee on Budgets in place of the rapporteur, Mr DURAND. He maintained in particular that the proposal for a directive submitted by the Commission could fill a serious gap. Referring to the modifications proposed by the Committee for Finance and Budgets, he stated that nearly all of them had been approved and invited the Assembly to vote in favour of the motion for a resolution submitted with the report.

During the meeting of the Committee on Energy, held on 20 March to discuss the report by Mr NOE' on the creation of a Community uranium enrichment capacity, Mr SPRINGORUM, on behalf of the Christian Democratic Group, confirmed that the supply of enriched uranium might pose certain problems from 1980 onwards. He mentioned the two methods of producing enriched uranium, which were rated quite differently in the various countries. It was therefore for the governments in Europe to take up a common position: Mr SPRINGORUM hoped that the positions taken up by the European Parliament would be followed up.

During the debate on the report presented by Mr NOE' to the Committee on Transport concerning air transport, Sir Anthony ESMONDE laid particular stress on the importance today of charter flights, and said he hoped a European air company would be formed. That would no doubt enable Irish parliamentarians to get to Strasbourg from Dublin more quickly.

Mr HEGER, speaking during the meeting of the Political Affairs Committee on the proposal from the EEC Commission for a directive on mutual assistance with regard to the recovery of sums paid in error under the common agricultural policy, supported the proposal from the Commission enabling Member States to recover such sums. He called on the committee to draw up proposals as soon as possible concerning penal laws for economic offences.

Speaking for Mr RICHARDS, rapporteur of the Committee on Agriculture, on the proposal from the Commission for a regulation on the production subsidies which the United Kingdom is being allowed to retain for certain agricultural products, Mr HEGER stressed that the implementation of the regulation was no easy matter because of the difficulty of comparing the two price systems

in force for certain agricultural sectors in the Community and the United Kingdom. All in all, he invited the European Parliament to support the proposal for a regulation from the Commission.

A delegation from the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), a body to which a number of Christian trade unions belong, met representatives of the Christian-Democratic Group of the European Parliament to discuss the Confederation's activities and to arrange for regular contacts for the exchange of information both between the two secretariats and between the Confederation and the Christian-Democratic Group. The WCL delegation included the Secretary-General, Mr BRUCK, the Assistant Secretaries-General, Mr Gujen VAN THAN and Mr Carlo SCUSTER, the President of the National Assembly of Upper Volta, Mr Joseph ONEDRAOGO, the Secretary-General of the Pan-african Union of Christian Workers, Mr Gilbert PONGAULT, and the Secretary-General of the European Organization of the WCL, Mr Jean KULAKOWSKY. The Christian Democratic Group was represented by the following members of Parliament: Mr KOLLWELTER, Mr DEWULF, Mr GIRAUDO, Mr MOMMERSTEEG, Mr NOE and Mr PETRE, as well as by the Secretary-General, Mr De POI.

Mr J. A. MOMMERSTEEG put before the Political Affairs Committee a report on European political cooperation and unification as the European Parliament's contribution to the efforts envisaged at the Paris Summit towards strengthening political cooperation. The rapporteur made a searching study of the way in which the suggestions made at the Hague and Paris Summit Conferences had been followed up, and concluded with a resolution expressing the wish that, while safeguarding and strengthening the European institutions, there should be regular meetings of the Foreign Ministers followed by a discussion between them and the Political Affairs Committee.

BREAKTHROUGH IN IRISH POLICY

by Senator Charles McDonald

On 28th February last the Electorate of the Republic of Ireland voted to change its Government. After an unbroken 16 years of majority in the Dail (Chamber of Deputies) Fianna Fail lost its mandate to govern in the 1973 General Election held on 28th February 1973.

This has caused much surprise in many circles in our country and was most unexpected especially in the Fianna Fail Party, as Mr. LYNCH need not have called a General Election until the Summer of 1974.

Ireland has three main political parties. Fianna Fail - 69 seats (75 in 1969); Fine Gael - 54 seats (50 in 1969); Labour - 19 seats (18 in 1969).

The General Election was unique in recent Irish Election History; Fianna Fail actually increased their overall vote, while at the same time managed to fall from 75 seats in 1969 to a meagre 69 this year. We in Fine Gael increased our vote also and gained 4 seats, but with Labour doing badly in many constituencies, the overall National Coalition vote actually fell.

In my view one of the main causes of the National Coalition win was the intelligent use by Fine Gael and Labour voters of our P.R. (Proportional Representation) system, which caused Kevin Boland's three-seater gerrymander before the '69 Election a rebound this time on Fianna Fail.

Also the fact that the Government had gone stale - they ceased to have any drive. Actually some six years ago when Mr. Lynch took over the reins of office from Mr. Lemass, he committed himself to no new programmes and no new departures in policy were expected of him. Fianna Fail had then been 10 years in office and Mr. Lynch's mandate from his party was to carry on as before and that was just what he did.

With the exception of the establishment of regional structures for health, development and tourism, his administration is remembered for not a single major administrative or legislative reform or important new initiative on the National Scale.

In fact the Government had got away with running the Country by piece-meal legislation rather than by any grand plan.

Divisions within Fianna Fail itself were obvious, and while Mr. Lynch appeared an affable leader within his party, he was unable to combat the opposition which came from outside.

The lack of any Government policy relating to Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom other than wait and see policy was not in 1973 acceptable to the public.

The Fianna Fail party was formed out of those who originally opposed the infant Irish State, as established by the late W.T. Cosgrave (father of the new Taoiseach) and his First Free State Government between 1922 and 1932 and those doctrinaire republicans of the twenties first came to power under de Valera in 1932. So you can appreciate the difficulties, because of their origins, experienced in those last difficult years by Fianna Fail in having a sufficiently hard line to deal firmly with subversive elements.

During the campaign many people remembered the Arms Trial and the misappropriation of public funds.

It has been said many times that the North was not an issue in the campaign and this indicates a Southern lack of interest in the Northern crisis. In fact, I believe the North was not an issue because the former Prime Minister, Mr. Lynch, went to the country before the publication of the White Paper. He presumed to make an issue of the North without presenting any particular policy on which the electorate could form an opinion. He hoped to get through with the same generalities and ambiguities that they passed off for policy.

One of their greatest mistakes during the campaign was their complete underestimating the intelligence both of the electorate and of the opposition parties.

To my mind the voters opted for the National Coalition's 14-Point-Manifesto which spelt out our policy on NORTHERN IRELAND - INFLATION - SOCIAL REFORM - HOUSING - DIFFERENTIAL RENTS - RATES - ESTATE DUTIES or DEATH DUTIES - EDUCATION - IRISH LANGUAGE - LOCAL DEMOCRACY - PLANNING PERMISSIONS - STATUS OF WOMEN - BROADCASTING and the E.E.C.

Of the 14-Point-Manifesto perhaps the rates problem, and the death duties in rural areas, with the social reforms and housing in urban areas caused the most concern. Mr. Lynch's reaction to the document was on 15th February (Daíl dissolved on 5th) as reported in the Irish press:

"A Government Revue Committee was investigating the rates system and now a hastily conceived 14-Point-Plan was attempting to solve this complex issue".

Practically all the Fianna Fail Party spokesmen followed this line, until on 22nd February, the 17th day after the dissolution of the Daíl and only 6 days before polling day, Fianna Fail announced a proposal to abolish all rates on houses and other dwellings, but only from 1st April 1974.

This kind of politics was in sharp contrast to the campaign of Liam COSGRAVE whose stature has been steadily rising over the past few years and it also highlighted his honesty and integrity. The public accepted the sincerity of his campaign by his steadfastness to the policy he outlined when he first began.

The people decided wisely and Mr. COSGRAVE comes to office with several initial and substantial advantages. He is assisted by perhaps the most talented cabinet to have assumed office since the War. He has the immediate advantage of the E.E.C. agricultural subsidies to underwrite his first budget. Electorally he is in a position to review the constituencies in his favour. (Although knowing the man I would not be surprised if he set a new precedent for both Fianna Fail and the Unionists Party by setting up an Independent Electoral Boundary Commission.) On the other side of the coin he inherits a situation vis-à-vis the North that could hardly be worse and which has all the signs of deteriorating much further.

Mr. COSGRAVE therefore must action two fronts. Domestically he must go ahead with the constitutional reforms which Mr. Lynch recognized to be desirable and necessary, but which he lacked the courage to tackle. On the North I feel he can be relied upon to pursue a much stronger line with the Tory U.K. Government. The Irish dimension is the same today as it always was and always will be. It is the inalienable right of the inhabitants of this island to determine their own destiny and constitutional arrangement. No one will want that right asserted by force any more than it was resisted by force for so many centuries.

Senator Charles MCDONALD (Fine Gael Party) is member of the CD-Group of the EP.

